

heart out for him; he would never have disturbed him." More annoying was a habit into which the ghost fell of rattling latches, jingling warming pans and other metal utensils, and brushing rudely against people in the dark. "Thrice," asserts the Rev. Samuel, "I have been pushed by an invisible power, once against the corner of my desk in the study, a second time against the door of the matted chamber, a third time against the right side of the frame of my study door."

On at least one occasion Old Jeffrey indulged in a pastime popular with the spiritualistic mediums of a later day. John Wesley tells us, on the authority of sister Nancy, that one night, when she was playing cards with some of the many other sisters, the bed on which she sat was suddenly lifted from the ground. "She leapt down and said, 'Surely Old Jeffrey would not run away with her.' However, they persuaded her to sit down again, which she had scarce done when it was again lifted up several times successively, a considerable height, upon which she left her seat and would not be prevailed upon to sit there any more."

Clearly, the Wesley family were in a bad way. Entreaties, threats, exorcism, had alike failed to banish the obstinate ghost. But though they knew it not, relief was at hand. Whether repenting of his misdoings, whether desirous of seeking pastures new, Jeffrey, after a visitation lasting nearly two months, took his departure almost as unceremoniously as he had arrived, and left the unhappy Wesleys to resume by slow degrees their wonted ways of life.

#### What Were the Ghosts

SUCH is the story unfolded by the Wesleys themselves in a series of letters and memoranda, which, taken together, form, as was said, one of the best authenticated narratives of haunting extant. But before endeavoring to ascertain the source of the phenomena credited to the *soi-disant* Jeffrey, another and fully as important inquiry must be made. What, it is necessary to ask, did the Wesleys actually hear and see in the course of the two months that they had their ghost with them? The answer obviously must be sought through an analysis of the evidence for the haunting. This chronologically falls into three divisions. The first consists of letters addressed to young Samuel Wesley by his father, mother, and two of his sisters, and written at the time of the disturbances; the second, of letters written by Mrs. Wesley and four of her daughters to John Wesley in the summer and autumn of 1726 (that is to say, more than nine years after the haunting), of an account written by the senior Samuel Wesley, and of statements by Hoole and Robert Brown; the third, of an article contributed to "The Arminian Magazine" in 1784 (nearly seventy years after the event) by John Wesley.

Now, the most cursory examination of the various documents shows remarkable discrepancies between the earlier and later versions. Writing to her son Samuel, when the ghost was still active, and she

would not be likely to minimize its doings, Mrs. Wesley thus describes the first occurrences:

"On the first of December, our maid heard, at the door of the dining room, several dismal groans like a person in extremes, at the point of death. We gave little heed to her relation, and endeavored to laugh her out of her fears. Some nights (two or three) after, several of the family heard a strange knocking in divers places, usually three or four knocks at a time, and then stayed a little. This continued every night for a fortnight; sometimes it was in the garret, but most commonly in the nursery, or green chamber."

Contrast with this, the portion of John Wesley's "Arminian Magazine" article referring to the same period:

#### John Wesley's Testimony

ON the second of December, 1716, while Robert Brown, my father's servant, was sitting with one of the maids, a little before ten at night, in the dining room which opened into the garden, they both heard one knocking at the door. Robert rose and opened it, but could see nobody. Quickly it knocked again and groaned. He opened the door again twice or thrice, the knocking being twice or thrice repeated; but still seeing nothing, and being a little startled, they rose and went up to bed. When Robert came to the top of the garret stairs, he saw a handmill, which was at a little distance, whirled about very swiftly. . . . When he was in bed, he heard as it were the gobbling of a turkey cock close to the bedside; and soon after, the sound of one stumbling over his shoes and boots; but there were none there, he had left them below. . . . The next evening, between five and six o'clock, my sister Molly, then about twenty years of age, sitting in the dining room reading, heard as if it were the door that led into the hall open, and a person walking in, that seemed to have on a silk nightgown, rustling and trailing along. It seemed to walk round her, then to the door, then round again; but she could see nothing."

As a matter of fact, the contemporary records are silent respecting the extraordinary happenings that overshadow all else in the records of 1726 and 1784. Admitting as evidence only the fact set forth as having been observed by the relators themselves, the haunting is reduced to a matter of knocks, groans, tinglings, squeaks, creakings, crashings, and footsteps. We are, therefore, justified in believing that in this case, like so many others of its kind, the fallibility of human memory has played an overwhelming part in exaggerating the experiences actually undergone; that, in fine, nothing occurred in the rectory at Epworth, between December 1, 1716, and January 31, 1717, that may not be attributed to human agency.

Who, then, was the agent? Eliminating outsiders, as we must, our inquiry narrows to the inmates of the rectory. Of these, Mr. and Mrs. Wesley may at once be left out of consideration, as also may the servants, all accounts agreeing that from the outset

they were genuinely alarmed. There remain only the Wesley girls, and our effort must be to discover which of them was the culprit.

At first blush this seems an impossible task; but let us scan the evidence carefully. We find, to begin with, that only four of the seven sisters are represented in the correspondence relating to the haunting. Two of the others, Kezziah and Martha, were mere children and not of letter writing age, and their silence in the matter is thus satisfactorily accounted for. But that the third, Mehetabel, should likewise be silent is distinctly puzzling. Not only was she quite able to give an account of her experiences (she was at least between eighteen and nineteen years of age), but it is known that she had a veritable passion for pen and ink, a passion which in after years won her no mean reputation as a poetess. And, more than this, she seems to have enjoyed a far greater share of Jeffrey's attentions than did any other member of the family. "My sister Hetty, I find," remarks the observing Samuel, "was more particularly troubled." And Emilia declares, almost in the language of complaint, that "it was never near me, except two or three times, and never followed me as it did my sister Hetty."

Manifestly, it may be worth while to inquire into the history and characteristics of this young woman. Her biographer, Dr. Adam Clarke, informs us that "from her childhood she was gay and sprightly; full of mirth, good humor, and keen wit. She indulged this disposition so much that it was said to have given great uneasiness to her parents; because she was in consequence often betrayed into inadvertencies which, though of small moment in themselves, showed that her mind was not under proper discipline; and that fancy, not reason, often dictated that line of conduct which she thought proper to pursue."

#### Just the Girl to Do It

THERE can, then, be little question that Hetty Wesley was precisely the type of girl to derive amusement by working on the superstitious fears of those about her. We find too in the evidence itself certain fugitive references directly pointing to her as the creator of Old Jeffrey. It seems that she had a practice of sitting up and moving about the house long after all the other inmates, except the Rev. Samuel, had retired for the night. The ghost was especially noisy and malevolent when in her vicinity, knocking boisterously on the bed in which she slept, and even knocking under her feet. And what is most suggestive, two witnesses, her father and her sister Susannah, testify that on some occasions the noises failed to wake her, but caused her "to tremble exceedingly in her sleep." It must, indeed, have been a difficult matter to restrain laughter at the spectacle of the nightgowned, nightcapped, much bewildered parson, candle in one hand and pistol in the other, peering under and about the bed in quest of the invisible ghost.

## THE VINDICATION OF NATURE

By BEN WINSLOW

THE animals of the jungle, the river, the sea, and the forest of all climes were assembled for the final arraignment of Nature and to petition for a redress of grievances. Each came with a plaint, a charge of neglect or an accusation of favoritism, and Nature answered each in turn. The Owl sat in judgment, and the Secretary Bird recorded the proceedings.



The Lion was the first to speak. "I have only one fault to find, Why has she given me this heavy, shaggy mane?"

And Nature answered, "Your power lies in your fore legs, and to protect the powerful muscles that put these destructive members in motion, your mane is provided. Otherwise they would be stiffened by cold, or relaxed by heat, and seldom ready for instant use."

"But why," asked the Tiger, "have you given both of us tongues so rough that in caressing our loved ones we almost tear the skin?"

"How else could you scrape the minute particles of flesh from the bones of your prey?"

Said the Bear, "I can complain only of the awkward, shuffling walk that you have inflicted upon me."

And Nature answered, "Your defense against enemies is principally in your strangling hug, and in procuring your food you are frequently obliged to climb tall trees. For these reasons I have not provided you with collar bones. Had I done so, you could not hug to death, nor climb trees as you now do. It is the absence of collar bones that makes you walk so clumsily."

The Seal came to complain that his nose was made to close habitually.

"You hunt your prey beneath the water, therefore, your nostrils being closed by their own machinery, you have no care concerning them, and can devote your attention and all of your energy to your prey."

Said the little Squirrel, "You have made my tail so long and bushy that I am an easy mark for gunners."

"Your safety lies in your ability to spring about from tree to tree. Your long bushy tail serves to balance your body while springing, and, by acting as a parachute, prevents jars and heavy falls."

The Porcupine bristled up and asked the reason for "all these unsightly quills."

"You are a defenseless animal, and your only protection from your natural enemies is your ability to roll up into a bristling ball of sharp spines."

"Why," asked the Hare, "have you made my hind legs so much longer than my fore legs?"

"Being defenseless, you are an animal of flight. Were your little legs of equal length, you could scamper only slowly. As it is, you cover ground in leaps and bounds, often as much as twenty-five feet at a leap. There is another advantage in your long hind legs; you can go faster up hill than your enemies, whose hind legs are no longer than their fore legs. Thus you are often able to escape them by running on rising ground."

"This," said the Giraffe, "is what you have done to me: You have given me a long, ungainly neck and a small, disproportionate head. You have endowed me with a long, prehensile tongue, filled my nostrils with stiff hairs, and set my eyes prominently near the back of my head."

Nature replied, "You feed upon the branches of tall trees; therefore your long neck. A large head at the end of your neck would possess a weight disproportionate to your muscular power. Your tongue collects the tender twigs into large bunches; but for this you could bite only the single ends of the



sprigs. Browsing among the branches of the trees, you disturb a great many insects, and if it was not for the stiff hairs they would enter your nostrils and cause you great annoyance. Your enemies usually spring upon you from behind, therefore your eyes are placed where they will be of most use."

The Hippopotamus complained of his big, ugly teeth and awkward walk.

"Your mission is to clean the rivers of vegetable life, which, by reason of its rapid growth, would soon choke up the stream. Therefore your

food is the coarsest of all the mammalia. Hence the teeth with which to properly grind it. Your walk is due to your short legs, which were designed for walking on the bottom of the river, not on land."

The Elephant, the last witness, complained of his heavy trunk and the absence of a neck.

"Had you a neck proportionate to the length of your fore legs, like other animals, you would lack the muscular force necessary to elevate and sustain your enormous head. As you must eat from the ground, your trunk has been provided to compensate for the absence of a neck."

"One question before I pass judgment," said the Owl. "Why has every animal, reptile, fish, bird, and insect an appointed enemy?"

"Because birth, life, and death constitute the order appointed by a divine Being, and He has chosen the best means to a necessary end."

"Judgment!" cried the animals in chorus.

"It is this," said the Owl. "Accuse not Nature. She has done her part. Do thou but thine."